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The BUSH burning,
yet not consumed,

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The CHURCH in the Fur-
nace, yet still preserved.

Three Sermons,

The first whereof was preached
at Lintoun, March 11th,
the other two at Mountain
in the Parish of Inveresk,
April 29th, 1739.

By the late Reverend and Learned

Mr. JOHN HUNTER,

Minister of the Gospel in the Associate Con-
gregation at Gateschaw.

Enter'd in Stationer's Hall.

EDINBURGH,

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Behoof of the Author's Widow. 1743.

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THe following Sermons were taken from the Author's Mouth in the Delivery, by some who were expert in writing Short-Hand, and whose Integrity in this Matter cannot be reasonably questioned. These Sermons (as well as the six formerly published under Mr. *Hunter's* Name) will approve themselves to be his, unto such as heard them, and were acquainted with his Stile: Nor will such Persons see any Cause for suspecting that any undue Freedom has been used in preparing them for the Press. And, for obviating and preventing any Stories that have been, or may be spread against the *Genuineness* of these three Sermons, and of the other six, the Publisher takes this Occasion to declare, anent the Copies from which all these were printed, that he had Occasion to put the same into the Hands of a Reverend Member of the *Associate Presbytery*, who was intimately acquainted with the Author; and who, upon revising those Copies of the former six, and of the present three Sermons, declared his Satisfaction as to their being *genuine*.

S E R M O N I.

Preached at *Lintoun*, *March*
11th, 1739.

Exodus iii. 1, 2.

Now Moses kept the Flock of Jethro his Father in Law, the Priest of Midian: And he led the Flock to the Back-Side of the Desert, and came to the Mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a Flame of Fire, out of the Midst of a Bush: And he looked, and, behold, the Bush burned with Fire, and the Bush was not consumed.

Manifold Metaphors are made Use of by the Spirit of God in the holy Scriptures, to illustrate and set forth the Nature and Properties of the Church; so, in the Words of our Text,
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she gets the Denomination of a Bush, a poor, mean Bramble-Bush, a despicable-like Creature, that makes a very silly and mean Appearance in the View of the World. As the glorious Monarch of Heaven, when he appeared on the Stage of this World, to accomplish the Purposes of his Father's Love and Grace, made but a mean and insignificant Appearance, far from answering the carnal Expectations the *Jews* had conceived of him, and was esteemed as a tender Plant, and a Root springing out of a dry Ground, by the unbelieving and blind Generation that then acted their Part on the Stage of Life, who saw not the Glory, the Divinity and ravishing Excellency of his Person, concealed under the Rags of the human Nature: Just so does the Spouse of Christ, tho' her Robes are of Needle-Work, and she be all glorious within; tho' she be the Seed-Royal of Heaven, and has her Descent from above, make but a mean, silly and contemptible-like Appearance in the View and Esteem of those whom the God of this World has blinded. She is as little accounted of as a silly Bramble-Bush, that attracts no Man's Regard, engages no Man's Observation.

Moses, in this Chapter, is about his wordly Business; he kept the Flock of *Je-*
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thro his Father in Law, and led his Flock to the Back of the Desert: And, while thus employed, he is privileged with a very singular Appearance of God. This may teach us, that Diligence and Activity in our worldly Business is a very commendable Thing, and especially when gone about with a View and Regard to the Glory and Command of God; and that even the meanest Office in Life is by no Means degrading or dishonouring to the Saints of God; yea, many Times such as are endeavouring to serve God in the meanest Offices, are privileged with noble Manifestations from God, and sometimes raised to honourable Stations. Thus *Moses*, when keeping a Flock of Sheep, has an extraordinary Revelation from Heaven, and is called to the Office of a General and Deliverer to the enslaved Tribes of *Israel* in *Egypt*. Thus, again, *David* was taken from following the Ews great with Young, to sway the Sceptre of *Israel*. And thus *Amos*, who was of the Herdmen of *Tekoah*, was taken from that Office, to declare the Will of God to the People of *Israel*, and denounce his Judgments against the King's Court at *Samaria*.

Moses, after he had sojourned forty Years in the Land of *Midian*, and, during that Time, employed himself in tending the

the Flocks of his Father in Law, is honour^d ed with a Vision. *The Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a Flame of Fire, out of the Midst of a Bush: And he looked, and, behold, the Bush burned with Fire, and the Bush was not consumed.* In which Vision this holy Man gets a clear emblematical Representation of the Church of Christ in *Egypt*, and of the Wilderness-Condition and Situation of the Church of Christ unto the End of Time.

Before I go farther, you may readily ask me, Who was this *Moses*, that is privileged with this extraordinary Appearance of God? I answer, he was a very great and bright Man, who bears a very considerable Character in the sacred Writings. He was, in many Things, a noble and illustrious Type of our Lord Jesus Christ. No sooner is *Moses* born, than *Pharaoh* pursues him to take away his Life, as is plain from the bloody Edict passed by him, for cutting off the male Children of *Israel*. So, as soon as the Lord of Glory appeared in our World, wicked *Herod* pursued him for his Life. Again, as *Moses* was obliged to flee for his Life to the Land of *Midian*, so the Lord Jesus Christ, when but a very young Child, is forced to flee to the Land of *Egypt*, for Preservation from the Hands of bloody *Herod*. Again, *Moses* ran the
Risque

Risque of his Life in delivering one of his Kinmen from Death; so our Lord not only ran the Risque of his Life, but even lost the same, in rescuing his People from their spiritual Enemies. Again, *Moses* acted the Part of a Shepherd for a considerable Part of his Life; so our Lord Jesus Christ is by God the Father constitute a Shepherd, and acts the Part of one to the Sheep of his Pasture, and will do so till all his elect Flock be brought Home to Glory. Again, *Moses* was a Redeemer, in saving of poor enslaved *Israel*, and ransoming them from the sad and sore Bondage they groaned under, by the Tyranny of the *Egyptian* Task-Masters, and their barbarous Prince, and in leading them, thro' the Red-Sea and Wilderness, to the Borders of the goodly Land of *Canaan*; so our Lord Jesus Christ, a greater than *Moses*, delivers his People from Sin, Satan, and all their other spiritual Enemies; and, under a safe Convoy, leads them thro' all the Straits, Difficulties and Troubles they can be exposed to in this waste and howling Wilderness, unto the heavenly *Canaan*, that lies on the other Side the *Jordan* of Death. Again, as *Moses* was the Man to whom the Children of *Israel* always applied themselves in their Doubts and Difficulties; so is our Lord Jesus appointed a Counsellor; and
all

all who want their spiritual Doubts resolved, and their spiritual Grievances redressed, must apply unto him. *All Things whatsoever ye shall ask in Prayer*, says Christ, *believing, ye shall receive*, Matth. *xxi. 22. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: Hear ye him. As Pharaoh commanded the Egyptians, when in Want of Corn, to go to Joseph, so 'tis the Duty of all, under all their Wants and Pressures, to apply unto the Lord Jesus Christ. He is appointed Heaven's Trustee, to let out all Blessings upon Sinners: And I can assure you, that whoever of you shall, by Faith, apply unto our spiritual Joseph, whatever your Wants and Necessities be, ye shall undoubtedly get them all supplied. Whatever your Grievances are, come to Jesus and you shall get them all redressed. 'Tis said here, that Moses led his Flock to the Back-Side of the Desert; and in this he is remarkably a Type of Christ: For he leads his People to the Desert of Conviction and Humiliation. You read in Acts ii. that he led three Thousand Persons to this Desert in one Day, and, upon their coming there, led them also to Mount Sion, where they got a Discovery of Jesus Christ, as their only Saviour. Again, Moses came to Horeb, the Mountain of God. Wherein, may ye say, was he in that typical of Christ?*

Horeb

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Horeb and *Sinai* are but one Mount. Some Writers are of Opinion, that they are two Tops of one and the same Mountain. Unto this Mountain *Moses* came. Even so our Lord Jesus Christ came to Mount *Sinai*, and there took upon him all the Curses that were pronounced from that black Mountain, and bore all that Wrath and Punishment that Law and Justice threatened, in the Room and Stead of his People. O Sirs, you that perhaps just now are scorched with the fiery Flashes that issue forth from Mount *Sinai*, come to Jesus and you shall get these quenched by his Blood.

But to proceed. *Moses*, as I said before, gets here an emblematical Representation of the outward Condition of the Church of Christ in *Egypt*, and that in a very strange and extraordinary Manner, namely, a Bush burning, and yet not consumed. In this he got to him represented the melancholy and deplorable Situation of the Children of *Israel* in *Egypt*, while they were grievously oppressed and born down by tyrannical Task-Masters there. Tho' they were, in a Manner, burnt in the Fire, and all Means were used to bear them down, and root them out, yet they were not consumed; the more they were oppressed, the more they grew. Their sore Afflictions proved Medicines unto them.

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and,

and, by the Blessing of God, were Means
of their Growth and Improvement.

In the Words read in your hearing we
may very briefly notice these five Things
following.

1. We have an emblematical Representa-
tion of the Church of Christ. Behold, a
Bush burned. Here the Church of Christ
is compared to a Bush. As a Bush is a
mean, low, silly and insignificant Thing,
so the Church of Christ makes but a very
fender, mean and despicable-like Appear-
ance in the View of a carnal and blinded
World.

2. We have the ordinary State and Cir-
cumstances of the Church, and that is a
Bush burnt with Fire. The Church of
Christ is, for most Part, in Flames, either
an inward Flame raised by the old Man
that dwells in their Members, or an out-
ward Flame raised by Hell and Earth.
'Tis somewhat strange that the Lot and
Condition of the Lord's People, while in
their militant Circumstances, ordered by
their Lord and King, should be fiery
Tryals and a hot-burning Furnace. There
are many Reasons for this, which we shall
essay to mention afterwards. Whatever
their State and Condition be, whatever
Sun-shine of Prosperity they may be under,
at Times, yet, for most Part, they are in
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the Furnace. Their Lot is chequered with Troubles and Tryals; their Circumstances are mixed with a fiery Flame and Furnace.

3. We have protecting Mercy coming into the Midst of the Bush. No sooner is the Fire kindled in the Bush, but Mercy leaps out of the Heart of God into the Midst thereof. What the Matter, what thy Furnace be, O Believer, when such good Company as Mercy, preserving and protecting Mercy, is with thee? Be assured, that, when thou art in the Furnace, preserving Mercy bears thee Company. The three Children afford us a noble Instance of this. They were no sooner cast into the burning fiery Furnace, but one, like unto the Son of God, bears them Company. When they came out of the Fire, not one Hair of their Head (the most combustible Thing about them) was either singed or hurt. What is the Reason? Why, Mercy is in the Heart of the Furnace with them. If Mercy, O Believer, be in the Bush, no Matter tho' Hell's Flames were in it too.

4. We have the Greatness of the Sight intimate by this Word, *behold*. *Behold, a Bush burned, and was not consumed*. Is it not a great Sight to see a combustible Bush, green and fresh in the Midst of a
burn-

burning fiery Furnace? Is it not a great Sight to see the Church of Christ all in a Flame, and yet walking, like the three Children, in the Midst thereof, without the least Harm? Let Hell and Earth raise the hottest Persecution they can, yet the Church of Christ will look as safe in the Flames as the three noble Jews did, when in the burning fiery Furnace. Why so? Because her King will never leave her nor forsake her. She cost him too much to cast her off, or reject her, notwithstanding all her Faults and Follies. He'll never forsake his poor Bush.

5. And lastly. We have the Beholder of this great Sight. He is called *Moses*. He was a typical Spectator of this typical Representation. *Moses* beheld the burning Bush with much affectionate Concern; this is intimate in his turning aside to behold it. So Jesus Christ beholds his Bush with an endeared Concern. When he saw her like to be burnt up with the Flames of Law and Justice, he came and quenched the same with the purple Streams of his own blessed Blood. Justice had a Debt-Bond upon the Bush, and earnestly craved the Payment of the same. So the Lord Christ, because no Payment but that of Blood would do the Business, shed his own Blood for clearing the Debt. When the
Knife

Knife of Law and Justice was just going to cut the Throat of the elect World, Christ himself was the true Ram that was caught in the Thickets of Justice, and so, by his Sacrifice, diverted the impending Blow from lighting on the poor Sinner. Thus, Sirs, the Lord beholds his Bush with an affectionate Concern; yea, wonders at her, as *Moses* did. And well may Men and Angels wonder, when the Lord of Glory himself wonders at her. And, indeed, if the Son of God did not behold her with this endeared Concern, she would be swallowed and burnt up in the Flame.

The Words being thus shortly divided and explained, the Doctrine natively arising from them is this, *viz.*

Doct. That as a fiery Furnace, and a devouring Flame, is the ordinary Lot of the Church of Christ, so preserving Mercy is her Allowance, from her Lord and Head, even in this Situation. Behold, here is a great Wonder, a Bush burning, yet not consumed. The Doctrine you see is complex; and tho' it might well be split into two Propositions, yet I chuse rather to confine it to one; to save Time in the Prosecution thereof. Now, tho' the Text affords sufficient Proof for the Doctrine, yet, to confirm your Faith in a Matter that is calculate so much for the Faith and Comfort
of

of the Lord's People, I will name two Places of Scripture that will set it in a clear and convincing Light unto us. The first is, *Isa. xliii. 2. When thou passest thro' the Waters, I will be with thee; and thro' the Rivers, they shall not overflow thee; When thou walkest thro' the Fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the Flame kindle upon thee.* The Speaker and Promiser here is the great *Jehovah*; the Owner and Preserver of his poor despicable Bush. And, considering the Subject-Matter of the Promise, we may well say it must be a Flame, a Fire hotter than Hell, that can harm the Church of Christ. Why so? The Lord is with her. *I will be with thee.* Can any Thing harm a Person when the Almighty is with him? Surely no. Another Scripture, affording a direct Proof of the Doctrine, you have in *Isa. xlvii. 3. I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every Moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it Night and Day.* It will be a hot Flame the Waters of the holy Spirit will not quench. O Sirs, there is a River that runs into the Bush of Christ, that would quench Hell's Flames, if it were possible they could seize it. O! What is the Flame this River will not quench? If a Drop of it could but fall into Hell, all its Flames would be immediately quenched. The poor Bush would be destroyed, did not

not the River of God run thro' it? The Lord will keep it; lest any hurt it, he will keep it Night and Day. That is a strict Guard indeed. 'Tis as if he had said, I the Owner, I the Buyer and Purchaser of this glorious Bush, am so much in Love with it, am so much concerned for its Safety and Preservation, that I will see to it, I will protect and defend it, Day and Night, from all Harms and Dangers. What Reason have you to fear, Believer, what the Furnace be you are thrown into, when the Lord superintends and guards thee? Truly, says the Believer, I am not afraid of a Foe in Hell; for my Head and Husband is my constant Guard and Protector. The Believer may make a Supposition that can never take Place, Hell's Flames, tho' he were in them, would be to him what *Nebuchadnezzar's* fiery Furnace was to the three heroick Jews. They would not hurt or harm him in the least; one in the Form of God, and *who thinks it no Robbery to be equal with God*, would bear him Company, and bring him out safe and sound.

In the Prosecution of the Doctrine, I shall endeavour to do the following Things.

I. I shall shew why the Church of Christ, in this Representation, is compared to a Bush.

II. Why

II. Why to a burning Bush.

III. Shew what are these Flames that endanger the Bush.

IV. Discover how it comes to pass that the Church of Christ, when in such a Situation, is preserved.

V. Manifest how it is that our Lord Jesus Christ beholds this Bush with such Care and Concern.

VI. And lastly, apply the whole.

I return to the first Thing proposed, *namely*, To shew why the Church of Christ is compared, in this emblematical Representation, to a Bush. And, upon this Head, I shall mention these ten Particulars following.

I. Then, as a Bush is that which springeth from some Seed or other, in a Suitableness to its Nature; just so the Church of Christ, this Bush, this collective Body of Believers, and every individual Branch thereof, are begotten by the Word of Grace. Hence, says the Apostle Peter, 1 Epist. Chap. i. v. 23. *Ye are born again, not of corruptible Seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever.* There is not a Twig, the least Believer in this blessed Bush, but what must be a new-born Creature of the Seed of Grace, the Word of Truth, the Gospel of our Salvation. I own 'tis a great Mystery

stery what Influence or Concurrence the
 Faith of the Word of Promise has, thro'
 the operating Virtue of the Holy Ghost,
 in producing a new Creature in the Soul
 of a Sinner. This to carnal Men appears a
 fanciful Whim, exceeding the Belief of a
 rational Man. But, will you not believe
 it, because you cannot comprehend it?
 At this Rate, O Man, you may deny all
 Mysteries of Nature, and much more those
 of Grace, because your shallow Reason is
 not able to form suitable and adequate
 Notions and Conceptions of them. But,
 are there no Mysteries in spiritual Things,
 because you cannot comprehend them?
 Surely there are, tho' you should remain
 eternally blind, and the Scales of Ignorance
 remain for ever on your Eyes. There are
 many Mysteries in Nature that you know
 as little of as this we are presently talking
 about, yet you generally believe them:
 And surely the one demands as strong and
 firm Faith as the other. Oh! Cry to the
 Lord for the Teachings of his Spirit, that
 he may unfold unto you the Mysteries of
 his Grace. There is not a Child, Sirs,
 born into the World of Grace, but what
 must and will be born after this Manner:
 There must be a Word of Grace dropt into
 the Child's Heart, in a Way suitable to its
 Nature and Capacity, which, by the con-
 ccurring

curring Influence of the holy Spirit, will produce a new Creature. And this Word of Promise is the Seed out of which the new Man proceeds, just as a Grain of Seed grows in your Fields or Gardens. A collective Body of Believers do all spring and grow out of a Word of Grace. I own indeed one Word of Grace may be blessed to one Person, and another Word of Grace to another Person; yet all these Words of Grace are one and the same in Kind and Nature, all the incorruptible Seed of the Word. Perhaps, Believer, there is one Word blessed to thee, and another to thy Neighbour; but 'tis all the same Seed that comes from *Immanuel's* Land, the Land of Glory, whence all the rich and free Promises, whereby the Spirit operates, derive their Birth and Being.

Now, Sirs, examine yourselves, if ever you were acquainted with, or Partakers of a regenerating Work upon your Souls. Oh! Man, was ever Grace powerfully implanted in thy Soul? If thou art not a new-born Plant of Grace, thou dost not belong to the Bush of Jesus Christ; thou art a wild Bramble to this Day. Examine yourselves, my Friends. Did you never find the Plow of the Law turning up the fallow Ground of your Hearts, and the Seed of the Promise sown there by the Spirit of Grace?

Grace? Did you ever find the Holy Ghost dropping Grace into thy Soul; and when thy Conscience was pierced with strong Law-Terrors, that then a Word of Grace powerfully drew you to Christ, and you accepted of Christ, and so got your Consciences pacified by the Sprinkling of the Blood of Jesus upon them; and thus Faith, or an active Reception of Christ, was the first Breathing of the new Creature within you? But I must not insist, Regeneration not being the Subject I am just now called to discourse upon.

2. The Church of Christ is called or compared to a Bush, because, as a Bush, you know, has a Root on which it depends, and from which it draws Nourishment; so is it with the Church of Christ; she has the renowned Root of *Jesse*, on which she depends, and from which she derives all her spiritual Nourishment and Growth. As is evident from what our Lord says in *John v.*

4. *Abide in me, and I in you. As the Branch cannot bear Fruit of itself, except it abide in the Vine: No more can ye, except ye abide in me.* There is not the least Branch of the poor Bush, that can, by Nature, bring forth any spiritually good Fruit, unless it be united to Jesus Christ the living Root, from whence all Fruitfulness does proceed. The greatest and tallest Cedar in this Bush, as well

well as the meanest Twig, are all obliged to the renowned Root of *Jesse* for their Fruitfulness and Growth, and not to any inherent fruitful Principles of their own. Christ's mystical Body, his believing Members, are a vast Weight upon him; But, being the mighty God, he is abundantly able to bear them all. And indeed the Church of Christ is well born; she is on a strong Foundation; she has Jesus Christ himself for her Foundation, and so must be immoveable. They that would raze the Bush, must first raze the Root; the one must go ere the other go. You are but stark Fools and mad Men that meddle with the Bush of Christ, for she shall never be consumed. We challenge Men and Devils to wrong the least believing Twig in all this Bush. The Church can never be wronged, because Christ is engaged to present her, *without Spot, or Wrinkle, or any such Thing, unto the Father, at the last Day.* The Bush, Sirs, is nearly related to Christ, and dearly bought by him too. She is united to him as a living Root, and this is the proper, the sole Foundation, from whence all radical Moisture and Blessings flow. All the spiritual Blessings, that are the Property of the Church, spring from this Root alone. If you cannot say you are united to Jesus Christ, you are yet Strangers

Strangers to the spiritual Sap and Juice that is in him. If you have no Union with this blessed Root, you have no Communion with him in the Holiness of his Nature, the Righteousness of his Life, and the Satisfaction he made to Law and Justice for Sin; you have no Interest in his triumphant Ascension to Heaven, and his prevalent Intercession within the Vail; and so must needs be in a very dismal and lamentable Situation. O Sirs, as you are, by Nature, united unto Sin and Satan, so endeavour, by Grace, to be disjoined therefrom, and united to Jesus Christ the living and Life-giving Root.

3. The Church of Christ is called or compared to a Bush. Why? Because, as a Bush is not one Branch, but made up of many Branches; so the Church of Christ is not one Believer, but consists of many. One Branch will not make a Bush; so one Believer will not make a Body to Christ. There are Millions of Believers go to make up Christ's mystical Body; many Branches make up this one Bush. And, seeing all Believers are Branches of one and the same Bush, this should teach them Union, Harmony and Agreement among themselves. 'Tis a most unnatural-like Thing to see the Members of the same Body clashing and struggling with one another, when they are

are striving, thro' Grace, to hold the Head, as the Expression is, *Coloss. ii. 19.* O you that are Branches of this Bush, beware of clashing with, and dashing against one another, considering how unseemly it is to behold the Branches destroying the Bush! 'Tis true indeed, in a stormy Wind, the Branches united to one and the same Root, may clash with, and dash one against another. So when the Winds of Temptations, Afflictions, Persecutions, and Divisions, blow upon this spiritual Bush, the Branches will dash against one another. But when the Noon-Tide of Glory comes, they will better agree. Then Harmony and Peace shall succeed all their hot Disputes and fiery Contentions, and an undisturbed Calm possess their Minds for ever.

4. The Church of Christ is called, or compared to a Bush. Why? Because a Bush is a mean and low Thing, and makes but a silly and insignificant Appearance in the World. And what is more despicable, in the Eyes of the World, than Christ's Church? Oh! She appears as a very poor Society on Earth; hence she is called and compared to a lame Woman, leaning on her Beloved. She can but half walk, there's in her half Grace, half Sin. Further, she is compared to a Worm: Hence our Lord says, *Fear not Worm Jacob.* What is

is more mean and despicable-like than a Worm: Nobody notices the silly Worm that crawls among their Feet. 'Tis just so with Believers, the Church of Christ; the carnal Man does not think them worthy a Night's Lodging in the Wilderness. But *fear not Worm Jacob*. You know every Foot is ready to trample upon a Worm; and the Potentates and Monarchs of the World, and such as strut in Pride and Magnificence, think their Feet good enough for trampling and treading upon the Lambs of Christ: And when they don't resent it, they call them Creatures of a silly whining Spirit: Whereas, did they rightly take it up, they would look upon it as an Argument of a truly noble and excellent Spirit. Thus the World would devour the poor Lambs of Christ, and trample upon them as so many nasty Worms under their Feet. But they have a Promise to buoy up their Heart amidst all the Hardships they are exposed to; *Fear not Worm Jacob*, saith the Lord. Why, says the Believer, Have I no Reason to fear? Is not every Foot of cruel Pride against me? Am I not treated by the World as the Mire and Dirt in the Streets? *Fear not Worm Jacob: For I am with thee; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the Right-Hand of my Righteousness,*

Righteousness, Isa. xli. 10. And, indeed, tho' the Fire be kindled in the Bush, yet the Lord is in the Midst of it, and nearer to it than the devouring Flame.

5. The Church of Christ is called or compared to a Bush. Why? Because a Bush, you know, is exposed to manifold Wilderness Tryals and Storms. There's hardly a Wind blows, but the Bush in the Wilderness feels it. Just so is it with the Church of Christ. Hence saith our Lord, *O thou afflicted and tossed with Tempests and not comforted.* In these Words the Lord speaks to his poor Bush; and he beholds her, when thus tossed and afflicted, with Tears of Compassion. Our Lord warns his Bush of Tryals and Tempests in this Valley of Tears, *John xvi. 33. In the World ye shall have Tribulation.* That was ill News to the poor Bush: But there's a Cordial to support her amidst all her Tribulations, *Be of good Cheer, I have overcome the World.* Manifold are the Afflictions and Tribulations that the People of God are exposed unto in their militant State: They have scarce a fair Day and serene Hour in the whole Journey they are making to the Land of Rest, in the celestial Palace. Stormy Days, and foul Weather is their general Lot. You who are the Branches of this Bush may lay your Account with Storms

Storms and Tempests in the Wilderness. We read of the Church's being compared to a Woman that fled to the Wilderness, whilst the Devil, the old Dragon and Serpent, vomited Floods of Error, Persecution and Delusion after her. Alas! Sirs, the Devil is fast vomiting these Floods, at this Day, against the Followers of the Lamb in *Britain* and *Ireland*. There's a Remnant of the Lord's Chusing in *Scotland* at this Day, and the Devil is pouring out Floods against them. Many Errors and Delusions are now spreading. Well, Sirs, tho' the Bush be in a Flame, yet she shall not be consumed. Abide by this Bush, or be ruined and consumed for ever. Some will be ready to say, Alas! I cannot abide by a Bush all in a Flame; if that's your Bush, *Moses*, farewell; the Back of my Hand to it; seeing this is the Case, I'll have nothing ado with the Bush of Christ: For there's nothing about her but Flames of Error and Persecution. My Advice unto you is, O take up your Quarters here, or be ruined to Eternity. If you do not take up your Lodgings here, Hell-Fire will seal your Condemnation to a long Eternity; and then you will not have such good Company as the poor Bush. Well, Man, I cannot give thee a better Advice, and you will think it very strange to take up your Abode

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in a fiery Lodging. I doubt not but some will think it a Paradox. Yea, but it is a heavenly one, and a true one too.

6. The Church of Christ is compared to, or called a Bush. Why? Because 'tis dressed and pruned. The Owner thereof dresses and prunes it, that it may not go back and wither. 'Tis just so with the Church of Christ. There was never a Society on Earth so well taken Care of; never a Plant so well ordered and dressed. Of this you have a figurative or metaphorical Account in the 5th Chapter of *Isaiah*, where the Prophet thus sings, *Now will I sing to my Well-beloved, a Song of my Beloved, concerning his Vineyard: My Well-beloved hath a Vineyard in a very fruitful Hill. And he fenced it, and gathered out the Stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest Vine, and built a Tower in the Midst thereof, and also made a Wine-Press therein, &c. Verses 1 and 2.* O what Pains was he at with his Vineyard, the Soil and Ground of this holy and heavenly Bush. The Holy Ghost is the prime, the principal Dresser of this Bush; hence he is promised, as the Comforter, to come to the poor Bush, when the Jewish Flame was ready to burn it up. *I will send the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, unto you, and he shall guide you into all Truth, &c. In Psalm xli. 4.* He is called a River, the Streams whereof

whereof do make glad the City of God. That is the Holy Ghost, who is sent both to quench the Flames that endanger the Bush, and to preserve it from Barrenness, Destruction and Desolation. He himself is the great Dresser of the Bush. And as he dresses himself, so he set to Work under Dressers, Prophets and Apostles: These dressed for a Time. Then he appointed Pastors and Teachers to dress it to the End of Time. There must always be under Pruners and Dressers for the Service of the Church. O well cared for Bush!

7. The Church of Christ is called, or compared to a Bush. Why? Because, as you know, a Bush must be fenced and hedged about, and protected, that so it may not be trampled under Foot, and destroyed by the wild Beasts that range and roam thro' the Fields. Just so is it with the Church of Christ. Never was a Society so well fenced as the Church is. We know no Society that has so strong and impregnable an Hedge as the Church. She has an inner and outer Hedge about her. There is the inner Hedge of divine Grace and Mercy; the Church is locked up, as it were, in the Attributes of God, as in a safe Inclosure. Come, my People, saith the Lord, enter into your Chambers. These Chambers are the divine Perfections, which surround her, as a Hedge incloseth a Garden. The di-
vine

vine Promises, that are all Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus, are, as it were, an impregnable Hedge about the poor Bush. And there's another Hedge about her, *namely*, the outer Hedge of divine Ordinances and Institutions. The Ordinances of Christ, the Discipline and Government, which he, as King in Zion, hath instituted in his House, serve for a noble Fence to protect the poor Church from the Flames of Heresy and Error. And indeed, Sirs, they that would pull down this Hedge, are no Friends either to Christ or his Children: They that, under a Pretence of universal Love and Charity, are for removing the Hedge of Government and Discipline that surrounds the Church, will get no Thanks from Christ; for they are Enemies to him and his People, and dethrone him from his Government, while they make him worse than an earthly King, who protects his Subjects. O Sirs, such are Enemies to the Bush and its glorious Hedge. Satan himself could not deny but the Church was safely hedged and fenced, when he says unto the Lord concerning *Job*, *Hast thou not made a Hedge about him, and about his House, and about all that he hath on every Side? Thou hast blessed the Work of his Hands, and his Substance is increased in the Land, Job i. 10.* This was, indeed sound
Divinity

Divinity out of the Mouth of Satan. He had a Mind to give holy *Job*, a fruitful Branch of this Bush, a heavy Blow; and he argues with his Owner anent it. As if he had said, I cannot reach that Branch of the Bush a Blow, he is so well guarded and hedged about. Shall I get a Hit of him? I despair of getting it to Eternity, in regard he is so well fenced and hedged about. Thus are the People of Christ well guarded and protected. The Lord himself is their Fence and Hedge; and, therefore, they cannot miss to be in Safety, amidst all their Enemies whatever. O Sirs, seek to be among the Branches of this Bush, otherways you will be over-run by your Enemies, and be sacrificed to glut their vengeful Resentments against you. None are safe but the Branches of Christ's Bush.

8. The Church of Christ is called, or compared to a *Bush*. Why? Because a *Bush* like this, which *Moses* saw, being a Thorn-Bush, as some Divines think, is full of Prickles; so that Nobody can touch it without bloody Fingers: Just so is it with the Church of Christ; she is full of Prickles, to hurt and draw the Blood of all such as meddle with her. I do not mean here, Sirs, a Church that has the Benefit of a civil Establishment. If that could secure a Church, then the Church of *Rome*, that
Mother

Mother of Harlots, and Abominations of the Earth, has been secured these thousand Years bygone: I mean the Church that is built on the Rock Christ, a collective Body of Believers that are under the Influence and Government of the glorious Head *Emmanuel* himself: They that meddle with this Church, will find her to be, like *Jerusalem*, a *burdensom Stone*, that will crush them to Pieces, and grind them to Powder. *Paul*, in the Days of his Ignorance and Infatuation, tried this Trade of crushing and hurting the *Bush*. He, like a poor Fool, raised a bloody Club to level the Church; he instigated the civil and ecclesiastical Rulers to raise a Storm of Persecution against the *Bush*, thinking not to leave a living Twig in it all. But, while he is in the Heat of his bloody Rage and Fury against the Church, and going with a furious Force to ruin and destroy all the Christians at *Damascus*, the Owner of the *Bush* surprises him with an alarming Voice, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the Pricks*. That's to say, thou actest as unwise and foolish a Part, as it is for a Beast to kick with its Heels against sharp Stakes, and pointed Irons. There's prickly Vengeance surrounds the *Bush* of Christ; no Man will meddle with it, but shall come off with wounded and bloody Fingers.

Fingers. Ye that attempt to crush and oppress the Church of Christ, What will ye get but Confusion, Destruction and Ruin to yourselves and Offspring? What got Pharaoh for meddling with this Bush, when in his Dominions? Did he not meet with multiplied Plagues, one Plague upon the Back of another? And at last he and his mighty Host were overwhelmed in the Red Sea, and sank like Lead in the mighty Waters. You think, perhaps, that you are doing God good Service, when you are vexing and harrassing the Church of Christ, and setting all on Fire about her. But, be not mistaken, Zion will prove a burdensome Stone to all that burden themselves with her. The Stone that was hewn out of the Mountain without Hands will fall on you all, and crush you with redoubled Strokes of fiery Fury. In the cxxix Psalm we read of a Set of Men, that, like Plowers, plowed upon the Church's Back, and made long their Furrows. Well, what was the Consequence, the Lord cut asunder the Cords of that ungodly and persecuting Crew, Verses 3, 4, &c. And did not a Set of prelatick Men kindle a Fire of Persecution against the Church of Christ, in the late persecuting Times, in this Land? But, what made they of it? The Lord confounded their Plots, and cut off many of
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the Ring-Leaders in the Height of their Fury, and sent them to their Place appointed, like so many *Magor-Missabibs*, while they were a Terror to themselves, and all around them; and sent Deliverance to his Church and People. And tho' the same Spirit seems to be reviving at this Day, among a Set of corrupt Kirk-Men, yet let them take Care, God will reach them with a Blow, suddenly shall they be confounded.

9. The Church of Christ is a savoury Bush. Take this Bush out of the World, and it will smell like Hell; there would be nothing behind but the Object of God's Abhorrence. As long as the Church of Christ is in the World, that Sun will shine on the Inhabitants thereof. But when the Bush is away, you will not have the Light of the glorious Gospel, nor that of that Sun in the Heavens. O how foolish are they that grudge the Church a Residence in this World! O blind World, that will not allow Christ's Bush to abide among them, while not considering that the holy Seed of the Church is the Substance thereof, and preventeth Judgments from pouring in, like a Deluge, upon it!

10. And lastly, the Church of Christ is a costly Bush. Tho' she be but as a poor Bramble-Bush, yet she cost Christ dearer than the tallest Cedars in *Lebanon*. They
cost

cost him but a creating Word, but the cost him redeeming Blood. The Church is bought by the Price of Blood. Before the Church could be redeemed, the Son of God must die between two Thieves; be persecuted, afflicted and at last crucified, like a Malefactor, on a cursed Tree. O costly Bush! Dear bought Church!

In short, the Church of Christ is a happy Society. O happy, eternally happy will they be, that can say, I am a Branch of Christ's Bush. For the Bush shall be transplanted from this Earth to the Soil of Glory, and grow in verdant Beauty and fragrant Splendor for evermore. Oh! then, let us all, with one Voice, say, We will be Branches of the Bush; we will take up our Residence with the happy Bush, whether Prosperity smile, or Adversity frown.

The other Heads in the Method, I cannot so much as touch upon at present; and therefore, leaving them to another Occasion, I shall shut up all with a very brief Word of, APPLICATION.

O 1. Is it so, as has been said; then, Sirs, will you unite with this blessed Bush, and the Root thereof? O be united and married to Jesus Christ, and you shall be Branches of this happy Bush. Consider, that there's no Safety in evil Times, but being among this Company. The Wrath

of God will light on the wild Brambles of this World, and consume them to Ashes; but not one Drop of Wrath shall fall on the Head of this blessed Bush. Hasten and escape, Sirs, from among the Brambles that are destined to Destruction, unto this Bush that grows on the renowned Root of Jesse. Seek to be among the Trees of Righteousness, and the Planting of the Lord, and you shall grow as so many Willows by the Water-Courses, and be fat and flourishing, amidst all the withering Winds that may blow from Earth or Hell.

O be restless till you be brought to Jesus, and united to him as the living and Life-giving Vine, that so you may partake of the Sap and Juice thereof, and thereby be rendered fruitful in every good Word and Work; and, because he liveth, ye may live also. O thou art made up for ever, if thou, in Obedience unto the Command and Call of God, givest thy Heart to the Lord Jesus Christ. O believe on him, and be enriched forever!

Is it so, as has been said; then, O beware of wronging the Bush. The Owner will highly resent the least Wrong done to his blessed Bush. When Paul, in bloody Rage, was persecuting and raising a Flame in the Bush, there came a Voice unto him; Saul, Saul, Why persecutest thou me? Every

Stroke thou givest to my Members lights upon me: Whatever is done to the Members, Christ looks upon it as done to himself; for they and he are mystically one. If a Man were inflicting grievous Tortures upon your Son, would not every Cry of his pierce your very Heart? That is but a very faint Resemblance of Christ's Love to Believers; for his Love is, like himself, infinite. So that every Stroke ye give his People, is given to himself, and he will resent it highly. O Sirs, What ails the World at the poor Bush of Christ: 'Tis a very harmless Creature, which, like an innocent Lamb, means and does Harm to Nobody. Indeed, Sirs, the World cannot endure the heavenly Savour of Christ that is about Believers. *Ye shall be hated of all Men,* says Christ, *for my Name's Sake.* That's a Prediction of the Entertainment Believers shall get from the Men of the World. They shall be hated. For what? Just for Christ's Name's Sake, that perfumes them, and so should render them agreeable to all Men. But the World cannot come near Christ's Bush; they abhor her; she smells so with a Savour of Christ about her, that the World, which likes nothing but the Smell of Hell, hates her, and says, with the *Edomites*, Raze, raze her out of the Land; let not the Bush stand a Moment

Moment longer in our Land. And hence they think they would have a good and merry Time of it, if once the Bush were rooted up, and taken away. Then would their Floods of Iniquities, Errors, Patronage, Supremacy, Apostacy and tyrannical Usurpations over the Lord's Heritage, and their other Darlings, flow amain. O foolish, mad and frantick Persons, who thus think, thus act!

3. Is it so, as has been said; then, pray Sirs, keep Company with the Bush. It is good to be near her; there are some Crumbs to be had from Kings Children. But some of you may say, O 'tis dangerous to be near her; she is a burning Bush, all in a Flame. I'll tell you, Sirs, a burning Fire, at a Distance, appears more formidable than near at Hand. A great Divine once said, *The Cross appears to be heavier at a Distance, than when you behold it on the Believer's Back.* Just so is it with the Bush all in a Flame. Tho' it may appear somewhat discouraging and frightful-like at a Distance; yet, when you more nearly inspect it, it will appear with a more inviting and amiable Aspect. Then, Sirs, if you are for chusing Societies, for Safety to your Souls and Bodies, Goods and Gear, I know no Society better for you to join with. And any Thing that you lose, while
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in this Company, the Protector of the Bush has promised to repay it with ten thousand Times more Advantage. There's not another Society under the Cope of Heaven for Men to join with, recorded in Scripture, but this alone. Thou art but a dead Man, if thou unite not with it. Whatever the Flame in the Bush is, 'tis no great Matter, seeing thou art to be safe and secure amidst the same. If thou fearest the losing of thy worldly Goods and Gear, I am sure thou canst not lose them more honourably, than to throw them all, yea, and Life itself too, into the Flame for Christ's Sake. And this is the fair, the ready Way to get all protected and secured to you and yours. What is become of all the Persecutors that have harrassed the People of God? Why, they are all dead and gone. They, and what they had, are mostly perished from off the Earth, whereas the Godly, and their Seed, have been well and plentifully provided for, amidst all the external Hardships and Difficulties they have met with. Again,

4. And *lastly*, Is it so, as has been said; then, O tossed, tempted, and not comforted Branches of this Bush, take Comfort: Why? Thy Blasts will all soon be over, and Joy will come in the Morning. All that thou meetest with, O burning Bush, will effectually

with Fire and Brimstone. Amen. **SER-**
 his own Word. Amen. **SER-**
 and gone. They, and
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 and the Godly and their Seed have
 been well and plentifully provided for a
 midst all the external Hardships and Dif-
 ficulties they have met with. Again I
 say And lastly, I have been said
 that, O comforted, and not comforted
 Paraphrase of this Psalm, taken Comfort
 Why? Thy Blessings will all soon be over, and
 Joy will come in the Morning. All that
 thou needest with O Biting Bath will
 effectually

SERMONS II and III.

Preached at *Mountain* in the
Parish of *Inveresk*, April
29th, 1739.

Exodus iii. 1, 2.

*Now Moses kept the Flock of Jethro
his Father in Law, the Priest of
Midian: And he led the Flock to
the Back-Side of the Desert, and
came to the Mountain of God, even
to Horeb. And the Angel of the
Lord appeared unto him in a
Flame of Fire, out of the Midst of
a Bush: And he looked, and, be-
hold, the Bush burned with Fire,
and the Bush was not consumed.*

My Friends,

THE *Lot and Condition of the Church
and People of God, in this Wilder-
ness, is generally an afflicted Lot. They
are*

are ever and anon tossed with Tempests; and not comforted: They meet with many Trials and Difficulties in their Way to Glory, many heart-breaking Discouragements and Hardships. The Devil, the great Enemy of Man's Salvation, plies them daily with his hellish Temptations, endeavouring to seduce them from the Paths of the Lord, unto the Way that is applauded by the World. The World, with its bewitching Smiles and terrifying Frowns, continually tempts them to make Shipwreck of Faith and a good Conscience. Sin is every Day disturbing their Quiet, and imbittering all the Sweetness they have. They have, for most Part, a continued Scene of Sorrows and Disasters, Troubles and Trials measured out unto them; so that their *Sighing comes before they eat, and their Roarings are poured out like Water.* Contempt, Reproach, Persecution, and Disappointments ordinarily fill the outward Cup they have put into their Hands to drink. But, are the Children of God destitute of Comfort and Hope, amidst all these afflictive Incidents? No, sure; tho' they are like a Bush burning, yet they are not consumed. Their Case exactly resembles the Case of the Bush spoke of in our Text, *Behold, a Bush burned with Fire, and the Bush was not consumed.* In the Midst of all their Trials,

Trials, preserving and protecting Mercy is the merciful Allowance bestowed on them by their Lord and Leader.

In the Words we have now read in your Hearing, *Moses* is keeping the Flocks of his Father in Law, and, while thus employed, gets a signal Discovery of the outward State and Condition of the People of God. They are like a Bush burning with Fire, and yet not consumed. Tho' this emblematical Representation of a burning Bush principally hit the Case of the *Jewish* Nation in the Furnace of their *Egyptian* Persecution, yet it points out, in very lively Colours, the State of the Church of Christ in all Ages. If we narrowly view her external Lot in her several Periods, we will find that she is most fitly compared to a Bush burning, yet not consumed.

I entred upon this Text, some Time ago, at another Place, and, after I had essayed to divide and explain it, I observed this complex Doctrine from it, namely,

Doct. That, as a fiery Furnace and devouring Flame is the ordinary Lot of the Church of Christ, so protecting Mercy is her Allowance from her Lord and Head, even in this Condition.

The Method I laid down for prosecuting the Doctrine was this.

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1st. To

1st. To shew why the Church of Christ is compared to a Bush.

2^{dly}. Why to a burning Bush.

3^{dly}. What are those Flames that endanger the Bush.

4^{thly}. How it comes to pass, that the Church of Christ, in such a Situation, is preserved.

5^{thly}. How it is that our Lord Jesus Christ beholds this Bush with such affectionate Care and Concern.

Lastly, To make Application of the Whole.

At that Occasion I only discussed the first of these, and shewed, in ten Particulars, why the Church of Christ is called or compared to a Bush. I shall only at present just name them, and then proceed to the Consideration of the other Heads of the Method.

1. As a Bush proceeds out of some Seed, so the Church of Christ issues out of the Seed of the Word sown in a Gospel-Dispensation. Hence, saith the Gospel, *Ye are begotten again, not of corruptible Seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever*, 1 Pet. i. 23. O Sirs, I would exhort you to examine yourselves, if ever the Plough of the Law was brought into your Consciences, and that im-

immortal Seed of the Word sown in your Souls: If so, then are ye Branches of this Bush.

2. As a Bush has a Root, upon which it grows, so has the Church of Christ; she grows upon the renowned Root of Jesse, and has Sap and Nourishment conveyed unto her therefrom, which renders her fruitful.

3. As a Bush is made up of many Branches, so is it with the Church of Christ; she consists of many Believers. And surely it becomes all the Branches to live in Peace and Harmony, without clashing with, and dashing against one another.

4. As a Bush is a poor, mean, and low Thing in the World, so is it with the Church of Christ; she makes but a very mean and inconsiderable Figure in the World: Hence is she called a Worm, *Fear not Worm Jacob.*

5. As a Bush is exposed to manifold Storms and Dangers, so is it with the Church of Christ. Hence her Lord cries out, *O thou afflicted, and tossed with Tempests, and not comforted.* The Winds have blown upon this Bush ever since it was first erected. They blew hard upon it in the Days of Abel, and are blowing upon it, by Means of ecclesiastical Tyranny, in our Day.

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6. A Bush, you know, is pruned and dressed; so is it with the Church of Christ. The Holy Ghost himself is the prime Dresser and Pruner of this honourable Bush; and employs many Under-Dressers for the same Effect.

7. A Bush is hedged and guarded. It cannot stand, without being destroyed, if it be not hedged about. Just so is it with the Church of Christ, *Isa. v. 1, 2. My Beloved had a Vineyard in a very fruitful Hill, and he fenced it.*

8. A Bush is a prickly Sort of a Thing, especially a Thorn-Bush, such as this was, as some think; so the Church of Christ, this honourable Society, if any meddle with her, they will have bloody Fingers. *Jerusalem*, the Holy Ghost tells you, is a burdensome Stone, that will crush to Death all that offer to touch her: What got *Pharaoh*, that kindled a Fire in Christ's Church in *Egypt*? What got he, I say? He got Plague upon Plague, and a Red Sea at length for his Burial. And so will all that meddle with the Church of Christ.

9. A Bush costs the Proprietor dear; so did the Church of Christ; it cost him dear, *Acts xx. 28. Feed the Flock of God which he hath purchased with his own Blood.* One Branch of this sacred Bush cost the God of Glory dearer than Heaven and Earth.
How

How so, may ye say? Heaven and Earth cost him but a Word: But this cost him Blood, the Blood of God.

10. A Bush is a savoury Sort of a Thing; just so is the Church of Christ. Of all the Societies in the World, the Society of Believers is the most savoury; they have the Smell of Heaven about them. And indeed, Sirs, till once ye be brought to Christ's Fold, ye will never come out of the Mire and Puddle of Sin; the Pleasures of the World will be more pleasant and agreeable to you, than the Society of Angels and Saints. O this is a savoury Bush! You are all beholden to it, Sirs. But, if once it were transplanted into the Soil of Glory, that Sun will not shine upon you any more; you will enjoy no more of the good Things of Time.

I proceed now to the

II. Second Thing proposed, *namely*, to shew why the Church is called a burning Bush.

1. Because the Fire of Persecution is seldom out of her. Would you see the Church of Christ? You will see the Fire upon her. The Fire of Reproach and Contumely is seldom out of the Church, and every Member thereof. It has been the common Lot of the Church to be abused by the scurrilous Tongues of Men, to undergo Trials
of

of cruel Mockings. Again, the Fire of Persecution is very frequently in her, either Tongue or Hand Persecution. This Flame was kindled against the Head, and, to be sure, the Members need not think to get to Heaven without being singed therewith. In short, the Fire of all Sorts of Persecutions are commonly kindled against the Church, by Satan and his Emissaries, on purpose (if it were possible) to consume and burn her up.

2. Another Reason is, because of the Love the Owner exercises towards her. There is a great deal of Weeds grow about this Bush; and therefore she stands in Need of the Fire for Purgation. *John xv. 2. Every Branch that beareth Fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more Fruit. He purgeth it. How? Even by a fiery Flame. He kindles a Fire in her to take away her Dross and Corruption: And tho' this Fire be painful to bear, yet it is very profitable and beneficial for her. Hence, saith the Apostle, If ye be without Chastisement, whereof all are Partakers, then are ye Bastards, and not Sons, i. e. ye are Brambles, and not Branches of this Bush. And again, Tho' no Affliction for the present be joyous, but grievous. Nevertheless, afterward, it yieldeth the peaceable Fruit of Righteousness*

unto

unto them which are exercised thereby, Heb.
xii. 8, 11.

3. A third Reason is, that the Bush may be conform to the Root, *Isa. lili. 3. He shall grow up before him as a tender Plant, and as a Root out of a dry Ground.* Thus Christ is the Root on which the Bush grows; and that she may be conform to her Head, and resemble her Root, there's a Fire kindled in her Heart. But do not take it ill, Believer, that the Fire is kindled in thee. It may be the Fire of Affliction is kindled in thy Family, and thou meetest with some Crosses therein. Bear it patiently; 'tis designed to render thee like unto thy glorious Head and Husband. Again, don't take it ill, that a Fire of Contumely, Disgrace, and Reproach is kindled upon thee. For, Believer, thou mayst be assured, that, if the Husband-Man had not a View of raising you up to the highest Pitch of Honour, he would never kindle a Fire in you. Certainly there's a Drop of Grace in this Matter.

4. 'Tis called a burning Bush. Why? That the great Skill of the Proprietor, in preserving the Bush, may appear. Is it not wonderful, that a Hand-full of Lambs should be preserved in the Midst of Wolves? So it is no less wonderful that this Bush should be growing and green in the Midst
of

of Fire. And many Times the Church of Christ is most fruitful in the Fires: For in these the Weeds are taken up, and the Bush is made to prosper and thrive. It has been observed by many, that Religion, in its Life and Power, never flourished better than in the late Times, when the Lord's People were hunted as *Partridges* upon the Mountains, put in Prisons and Dungeons, and exposed to all the cruel Rage of prelatick Tyranny. Thus the Saying is verified, *The Blood of the Martyrs is the Seed of the Church.*

I come now to the

III. *Third Thing* proposed, which was to shew what are these fiery Flames that endanger the Bush of Christ. They are very many. I shall just hint at them.

1. Then, there is a Fire of apprehended and appearing Wrath. This is a Fire that all the Branches of this Bush have tasted in more or less, and all that are come to the Years of Discretion know this. Witness *Peter's* Hearers, in the second Chapter of the *Acts* of the Apostles, and *Heman* in the eighty eight *Psalms*, *When I suffer thy Terrors, I am distracted.* The Nature of Faith clearly shews this. What is the Nature of Faith, but a flying from the Wrath to come, and from one's Self, to the Lord Jesus Christ for Help and Salvation? So that

that there's a Necessity, in the very Nature of Things, that a Person, before he apprehend and believe in Christ, be in less or more convinced of his Need of the Saviour. And what is this but a Conviction, that the Fire of God's Wrath and Justice is kindled against him, and ready to consume him.

2. A second Flame that endangers the Bush, is the Fire of inward Sin and Corruption: And this is a Fire more frightful to the Branches of this Bush, than Hell itself. Hence an eminent Branch of this Bush cried out, *If Hell were on one Hand, and Sin on the other, says he, I would rather leap into Hell than into Sin.* But it is a Fire in the Bush, that shall not part with it, until it be transplanted into the Soil of Glory, the Paradise above. *O wretched Man that I am, says Paul, who shall deliver me from the Body of this Death? Rom. vii. 24.* This Fire of indwelling Sin and Corruption is like to burn up the poor Believer: But notice what follows in the 25th Verse, *I thank God, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord. So then, with the Mind I myself serve the Law of God; but with the Flesh the Law of Sin.* The Believer is perpetually harrassed with the Fire of Sin in his Mind, and it is, on many Occasions, like to burn up all his Graces: But he may draw Encouragement from the Victory the Promises

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of

of Christ assure him of, over all that Sin and Corruption that rageth in his Soul. *There's a River, the Streams whereof do make glad the City of God,* Psal. xliv. 4. And this River runs just thro' the Midst of the Bush, to quench the Flames that are kindled there. If this were not the Case, there could be no preventing of the Burning of the Bush. Hence it is said, *God is in the Midst of her: She shall not be moved; God will help her, and that right early,* Verse 5.

3. Another Fire which endangers the Bush, is the Fire of Personal or Family Affliction. The 6th Psalm is a Commentary upon this Subject. There are no Branches of this Bush, but what have felt this Fire, in some Shape or other. The Branches are often visited with grievous and sore Pains and Sickneses on their Bodies, Disappointments on their lawful Endeavours, &c. And how often does the Lord make an Attack on their Families, while he cuts off their pleasant Children, and crosseth the Means they use for providing a comfortable Livelyhood for them? *Job*, a very eminent Branch of this Bush, was a very remarkable Instance of this, while the Lord kindled a Fire against him, and thereby consumed and wasted every Thing he could reckon dear and valuable to him. But, amidst all this, they want not Abundance

dance of Comfort; for Jesus, their Head and Lord, saith, *In all their Afflictions I am afflicted.* He is in the Fire with them. There is no Fire kindled in the Church, but the Son of God is as eminently therein, as he was with the three noble *Jews*, when they were, by the tyrannical Command of the *Babylonish* Monarch, thrown into a burning fiery Furnace, as you may read in the 3d Chapter of *Daniel*. Consider, O Believers, that he is your All. And, if he be so, he will do all for you. He is your very Life; *When he who is your Life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in Glory*, Col. iii. 4. And what, pray, keeps the Bush alive in the Midst of the Fire? Is it not Christ himself?

4. Another Fire that endangers the Bush, is that of Satan's fiery Darts. Many Times the Devil throws his fiery Darts thick and threefold at the Bush, which are ready to burn her up. Hence the Apostle exhorts Christians to *take the Shield of Faith, wherewith they may be able to quench all the fiery Darts of the wicked One*, Eph. vi. 16. Thus, Sirs, the Bush is shielded; she is armed with the Shield of Faith, to repel all Satan's fiery Darts, when they are thrown at her. And, in this Case, she wants not abundant Matter of Comfort, while the Lord saith unto her, as he said unto *Paul*,
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an eminent Saint, when he got a *Thorn in the Flesh*, a Messenger of Satan sent to buffet him, *My Grace shall be sufficient for thee: For my Strength is made perfect in Weakness*, 2 Cor. xii. 9. Thus the Proprietor of the Church exerts his very Strength in preserving her in the Fire.

5. Another Fire that endangers the Bush, is that of divine Desertion. Many Times the Lord wraps himself up in Clouds and Darkness, that his People cannot see him: He withdraws himself from them, and seems to be gone. And, upon this Account, how often do they cry out with the lamenting Church, *The Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me*, Isa. xlix. 14. And with the Psalmist, *Is his Mercy clean gone? Hath he forgotten to be gracious? Hath he, in Anger, shut up his Bowels? Does his Promise fail for evermore?* Our Lord himself met with this Fire in the hottest Degree, when he was obliged to cry out on the Cross, *My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?* He was deserted, that they might not be forsaken for ever; he fell under a Cloud, that the Sun might shine upon them for ever. To preserve the Bush, he went into the Heart of the Fire: To save the Bush's Life, he willingly lost his own.

6. To name no more, another Fire that endangers the Bush, is that of hot Persecution

tion for Righteousness Sake, whether of Hand or Tongue. This was very early kindled in the World, when *Cain* lift up his Hand, and murdered his righteous Brother *Abel*. *Isaac* felt something of this, while the Apostle tells us, *He that was born after the Flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit*. They are Enemies, not Friends, that persecute the Bush; Bastard, unnatural Brethren, who, like *Edom*, cry, *Raze, raze, Jerusalem to the Foundation*. And this especially is the Cry of all the Church's apostate Children against her, while, for ordinary, they are the most keen and cruel Persecutors, as Witness *Julian* the Apostate. O how high did this Flame rise against the Church of the *Jews*, when they were groaning under *Egyptian* Bondage! And how high did it lift its bloody Head in the primitive Times, when, in ten several Persecutions, the Blood of the Martyrs of *Jesus* ran as the Waters of a River. And how fiercely this Fire raged in the late bloody Reigns, we all know, when abjured Prelacy swayed both in Church and State.

I proceed now to the

IV. Fourth general Head, which was to shew why the Church is preserved when in the Fire. And,

1. She is preserved, because she is gifted by the Father to Christ. *Thine they were,*
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says Christ, *and thou hast given them me.* And again, *Those that thou hast given me I have kept, and none of them is lost,* John xvii. 6, 12. They are gifted Persons, and given to him as his Crown; and ye know a Man will lose much before he lose his Crown, or his Jewels. Well, the Church is Christ's Jewels, as ye may see from *Malachi* iii. 17. whatever the World may think of them. And, to be sure, he will take Care of them, that none of them be lost. He purchased them at too dear a Rate, to lose any of them.

2. Another Reason why the Bush is preserved in the Fire, is, because it is his Office to take Care of the same. He is appointed the Keeper and Guardian of all his People, and therefore he will not fail to preserve them amidst all the Fires that may be kindled against them. When the fiery Flame of Justice was kindled and just ready to fall upon our first Parents in *Paradise*, on Account of their Rebellion and Apostasy from God, he stepped in in the very Nick of Time, and quenched it, while he saith, *The Seed of the Woman shall bruise the Serpent's Head,* Gen. iii. 15.

3. Another Reason why the Bush is preserved in the Fire, is, because she is united to the Lord Jesus, as the living and Life-giving Root. And you must first destroy

destroy the Root, before you can destroy the Bush that grows thereupon. Christ is the Rock upon which the Church is built, and surely the Gates of Hell shall never be able to prevail against her. It is indeed a despicable-like Creature in itself, but it is supported by a very strong Root. All Believers are united to Christ the true and living Vine, and this Union shall never be dissolved, never be broken; neither shall any pluck the Branches from the Stock.

4. Another Reason of the Bush's Preservation in the Fire, is, because Guilt, that rendred her combustible, is intirely removed. The Curse of a broken Law, that would have infallibly burned her up, is altogether taken away, while Christ was made a Curse for them. The Fire of the Curse spent all its Fury upon the Head; so that none of it can fall upon the Members. Thus is the Curse effectually removed from all that are united to the Root Christ, and it is impossible they can be either hurt or singed thereby. *Because I live,* says he to the Bush, *ye shall live also.* As long as Life is in the Head, there cannot a Member die. To suppose this, would reflect a Stain upon the Mediator's Glory; it would be a Blur upon his Honour.

V. The fifth Thing proposed was to account for the Reasons why the Lord takes

takes such an affectionate Care of his Bush, when surrounded with Fire and Flames: He looks not upon her as an idle Spectator, but, full of Compassion, beholds her with a sympathizing Eye, when she poureth out her Complaints unto him. What may be the Reason of this?

1. Love is one Reason: *I have loved thee*, says he, *with an everlasting Love; therefore with loving Kindness have I drawn thee.* And his Care and Compassion must be according to his Love. What one loves, he cannot miss to exercise an affectionate Care about.

2. Another Reason is, because the Bush is committed to his Care. None can take Care of the Bush, but the Proprietor. Neither Angels nor Men can perform this Office for her, for a Moment. What Arm could have protected the Bush, amidst the devouring Fire, but the Arm of *Jehovah*. When the Fire of apprehended Wrath is kindled in thy Bosom, Man, nothing can quench it but the Blood of Jesus. All the Waters of the Flood of *Noah*, that overwhelmed and drowned the old World, could not quench that Fire; all the Blood of the Creatures, tho' poured out at once, could not do it. No Blood but that of the Church's Proprietor could effectually quench the Fire of Wrath.

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3. Another Reason why the Lord be- holds his Church, when in the Fire, with an affectionate Care and Concern, is, be- cause she is dear bought : And what is dear bought is commonly much made of. What did she cost him, may ye say ? She cost him his very Life and Heart's Blood. *All that a Man hath,* said Satan concerning Job, *will he give for his Life.* And yet Christ parted with his Life for his poor Bush. Thus is she a costly Bush ; and so is esteem- ed by him as a Crown and Diadem in his Hand.

4. Another Reason of this is, because she is helpless in herself, and cannot afford herself any Assistance amidst all the Dan- gers that may overtake her. And indeed, if the Proprietor should relinquish her, she would be extinguished by the Fires that are kindled against her. The Church, Sirs, is exposed to many Dangers and Flames. Our Lord hath told us, that she *shall be hated of all Men for his Name's Sake.* She is the Object of the World's Hatred and Malice ; and every Body is still hacking at her to destroy her. And therefore does the Lord exercise Pity, Compassion and Care towards her. And tho' she is hated of all Men, yet she is taken Care of by him : The less Help she hath from Earth, the more she hath from Heaven.

Witness *Jacob*, an extraordinary Branch of this Bush; he was attacked by *Laban* his Father in Law, at one Time; and by his own Brother *Esau*, at another. Well, what got he to support him in this difficult Case? Why, the Lord Jesus himself manifested himself wondrously to him, and bridled the Rage of his powerful Enemies, and of Wolves made them Lambs. The Church must not be attacked with Enemies, before, behind, and one every Hand, without having any to care for her. The Lord is and will be her almighty Helper and powerful Protector. She would soon be destroyed by her malicious Foes, if the Owner did not take an especial Care of her. When *Herod* stretched forth his Hand, to vex the Church of Christ, the Lord permitted him indeed to kill *James* the Brother of *John* with the Sword; but when he was going to massacre *Peter* likewise, the Lord steps in for his Relief, and accomplishes a merciful Deliverance for him out of the Hands of the bloody Wolf. Thus he manifested himself most remarkably to be the Keeper of his People.

5. Another Reason of this is, because the Bush is useful and fruitful. When cursed *Cain* meddled with godly *Abel*, there is a Mark of Infamy put upon him: But he sets a Mark of special and distinguishing Favour upon his own People, *Ezek. ix. 4. Set a Mark upon the Foreheads of the Men that sigh and cry for all the Abominations that are done in the Midst of the City.* The Lord's People are very useful in the World; they are Blessings to the Men they live among. They do more Service, by their Prayers and Piety, for a Land and Nation, than stout Armies and numerous Fleets. Hence saith *Elisha* of the Prophet *Elijah*, *My Father, my Father, the Chariots of Israel, and the Horsemen thereof.* God will be glorified in his Saints. Tho' the World look upon them, as *Dives* did upon *Lazarus*, with Con-

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tempt and Disdain, yet they shall be set at the Table above, where the unhallowed Bramble shall not dare to set up its Head.

Having thus briefly discussed the doctrinal Part of this Discourse, I proceed to make some practical Improvement of the Whole, and that in few Words.

1. Is it so, that the Bush of Christ, notwithstanding she be surrounded with Fire and Flames, shall never be extinguished or consumed; then, Sirs, take up your Quarters in this Bush. Can you be satter than where the King of Glory lodges? *Psalm cxxxii. 13, 14. The Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his Habitation. This is my Rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it.* Tho' the Lord be higher than the Highest, and greater than the Greatest; tho' he be the high and lofty One who inhabiteth Eternity, and dwelleth in an high and lofty Place; yet he condescends to dwell with the humble and lowly Branches of his Bush. He dwells with it, and in it. O, Sirs, if you would be safe, in evil and perillous Times, join yourselves to the Bush of Christ. Some, whenever Satan or the World raise a Storm of Persecution against the Bush, fly from it as from a devouring Fire. But, O foolish and slow of Heart to believe that Christ is in the Bush, and able to deliver it from all Storms and Tempests whatever. There is no Safety but by being in this Society. Desolation and Destruction may overwhelm all other Societies; but, as for this Society, no Evil shall come nigh any of her Dwellings. What the Lord said concerning the Children of *Israel in Egypt* holds true with Reference unto all his Children, amidst all Dangers and Fires. *I have seen, I have seen the Affliction of my People which are in Egypt, and I have heard their Groaning, and am come down to deliver them, Acts vii. 34.*

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2. Is it so, that this Bush shall never be consumed, notwithstanding all the Fires and Flames that surround her; then all such as kindle a Fire in her lose all their Pains and Labour. Tho' many Flames have been kindled against her, to burn her quite up; yet she is still to the fore. That Fire is not kindled yet, that shall be able to consume her. *Pharaoh* kindled a Fire in the Bush, when it was in *Egypt*, while, by a bloody Edict, he gave Commandment to kill all the male Children: But, the more they were slain, the more they grew. Just so was it in the Days of Tyranny and Persecution; the more the Lord's People were oppressed and harrassed, the more they increased. So that Persecutors spend their Labour in vain, in thinking to get the Bush rooted up and consumed. Neither Men nor Devils shall ever be able to effluuate their bloody Purposes against her.

3. Is it so, that the Church shall remain in Safety amidst all the Fires kindled against her; then we may see a great Difference betwixt the Fire that is kindled upon the Godly, and that which seizeth upon the Wicked. The one is a Fire of vindictive Wrath, that shall perpetually prey upon them, and shall never be quenched, under the smarting Pain of which they shall roar and howl for ever: The other is only a Fire of fatherly Chastisement and Correction, that has no Mixture of Wrath in it; but is solely designed to do them Service, to purify and refine them, as Gold and Silver are purged in the Fire. The one comes out of the Fire a black Devil, the other a fair Jewel.

4. Is it so, that a fiery Flame is the ordinary Lot of the Children of Christ; then ye may well know where his Bush grows. How shall we know that, may ye say? Wherever ye see a Fire of Persecution kindled, by all other Parties combining, there is the Bush of Christ: For the Bush and the
Fire

Fire are inseparable, *All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer Persecution*, says the Apostle, 2 Tim. iii. 12. If a Religion rises up in the World, and is generally applauded, you have great Reason to suspect it as not coming from God, but from the Devil. The Religion of Jesus was never yet applauded and extolled by the Men of the World, and never will be so: For it lies cross to their Humours and Inclinations; and therefore they cannot away with it. Whereas the Religion which Satan, as transformed into an Angel of Light, propagates, is agreeable to the Humours and Inclinations of carnal Men, and therefore meets with the Acclamations and Applauses of a carnal World. Wherever Satan bends his Fury and Rage, there, undoubtably, the Church of Christ is.

How shall I know, may one say, whether the Fire, that is kindled upon me, be sanctified or no? Unto which, I answer, you will know it by its Effects. For a Fire that the Lord sanctifies unto his People, produceth very blessed Effects. If thou hast got Good by the Fire, of whatever Kind it be, that is kindled against thee, then it has produced much Humility and Abasement in thee; it has elipt the Wings of thy Pride, and rendred thee low in thy Esteem. And if Affliction be sanctified unto thee, it will render thee fruitful in every good Word and Work, in regard whatsoever hindred thy Growth and Progress in Holiness, will be burnt and consumed in the Fire thereof. And tho' the Tools that are generally made use of, for kindling the Fire, be wicked Folks, and the Fires be kindled upon a hellish and unhallowed Design, not to preserve and purify, but hurt you; yet the Lord is in the Fire, and will give it a quite different Turn, so that, by Means thereof, thou shalt grow and increase, and be filled with the Fruits of Righteousness,

Righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the Praise and Glory of God.

5. Is it so, that Christ is in the Midst of the burning Bush to preserve her; then, Sirs, never quarrel with your Lord's Conduct in this Matter. Whenever Fire is kindled in the Bush, say, *It is of the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good.* When Shimei cursed David, he said, *Let him alone; it may be the Lord hath bidden him.* Submit unto what Fires the Lord seeth meet to try thee with. Let no fretful or repining Word, on this Account, drop from your Mouths: Neither let any murmuring Thought spring up in your Mind. Say, with your Lord and Master, *Not my Will, but thine, O Lord, be done.* And let it comfort you, Believers, that tho' the Bellows of *Erastian* or ecclesiastick Tyranny blow up the Fire against you; yet the Lord will be with you, that so the Fire shall not burn you, nor the Flame thereof kindle upon you. And when he has served his own Purposes of the Bellows, he'll throw them into the Fire, where the *Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched.*

6. Is it so, that preserving Mercy guards and superintends the Bush of Christ, in the very Heart of all Fires that may be kindled against her; then, O Believers, rejoice, rejoice, (I say) in your God and Protector. And good Reason have you for this Exercise: For your God has removed the Curse from every Fire that shall touch you. He has raken away the Curse of the fiery Law, and of vindictive Justice, that was ready to scorch and torment you in the Days of your Unregeneracy. Ye are not under the Law, but under Grace. And there is not the least Drop of Wrath in all the Fires that are kindled against you. And take Courage amidst all the Tryals you meet with; for they shall all tend to your Preservation, Improvement and Growth. Tho' now you may appear
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like so many sapless and withered Twigs amidst the Fire, yet, in the Issue, you shall grow green and flourish in the Courts of your God. You shall never be burnt up, tho' all the Fires of Hell and Earth were kindled against you. For you are united to Christ, and have an In-being in him, and he shall be as soon burnt up as you. Yea, suppose a Branch of Christ's Bush were cast into the Fire of Hell; yet it would not so much as singe it, in regard all its combustible Matter is wholly taken away.

7. Is it so, that Jesus Christ is in the burning Bush to preserve her; then, O Sirs, beware of all other Fires! Beware of the Fire of Sin, and of Defection from the Lord; for he is not in these Fires: You will never find him in these Flames, but to consume you. O be exhorted to beware of the Fires of Sin, and of departing from the Lord, and back-sliding from his Truths and Cause! These are pernicious Fires, and attended with very dismal Effects. And, be who they will, whether high or low, rich or poor, that are out of this Bush, and have no Connexion therewith, we proclaim them, in the Name of God, to be Satan's Brambles. And we declare, that, if they continue so, our Lord Jesus will, at the last Day, gather them and bind them in Bundles, and throw them into an unquenchable Fire.

Lastly, Is it so, that Jesus Christ is in the Midst of the burning Bush to protect and preserve her; then, O Sirs, never be ashamed of Christ, nor of his Truths, Cause and People. Whatever Fire is kindled in the Bush, let it by no Means render thee ashamed of Christ, or move thee to deny and abandon him. Rather than desert your Lord and Protector, embrace *Moses's* Choice; he chose rather to suffer Affliction with the People of God, than to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a Season; esteeming the

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Reproach of Christ greater Riches than the Treasures of Egypt, Heb. xi. 25, 26. Cleave to Christ and his Truths, whatever Fires may be kindled against you. Resolutely adhere unto him and his Way; the Fires will all soon be quenched, and you shall go to a Land of perfect Rest, consummate Pleasure and Delight, where no Thorn of Uneasiness pricks the Bush, no Fire of Wrath or Persecution, either scorches or singes her. In short, study to be holy and humble Branches of Christ's Bush, and to flourish in the Fruits of Holiness and Righteousness; and your Warfare shall soon be accomplished; and then shall you enter into the Joy of your Lord.

Now, may the Lord accompany his own Word with his rich Blessing, and to his glorious Name be ascribed endless Praise. Amen.

F I N I S.

A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

IN a few Weeks will be published, *The Evening-Time of the Church of Christ issuing in Light*, a Sermon from Zech. xiv. 7. *But it shall come to pass, that at Evening-Time it shall be Light.* Preached on the Monday after the Celebration of the Lord's Supper at Orwell, June 11. 1739. By the late Reverend Mr. William Wilson, Minister of the Gospel at Perth. A Discourse judged highly necessary in the present awful Season of Darkness and Delusion.

